



Social Science Program  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Visitor Services Project

# Serving the Visitor 2004

A Report on Visitors to the National Park System



University of Idaho  
Park Studies Unit



University  
of Idaho

Department of Conservation Social Sciences

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, contact:

Dr. Steven J. Hollenorst

Director

Park Studies Unit

College of Natural Resources

University of Idaho

PO Box 441139

Moscow, ID 83844-1139

(208) 885-7911

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A Report on Visitors to the National Park System

National Park Service Visitor Services Project

Prepared by:

Yen Le

Assistant Coordinator, Visitor Services Project  
Park Studies Unit

Margaret Littlejohn

Coordinator, Visitor Services Project  
Park Studies Unit

Jennifer Hoyer

Coordinator, Visitor Survey Card Project  
Park Studies Unit

Dr. Steven J. Hollenhorst

Director, Park Studies Unit  
University of Idaho

The following organizations and individuals  
contributed to the preparation of this report:

National Park Service  
University of Idaho  
Visitor Services Project Advisory Committee  
Sarah Arnold  
Brian Forist  
James Gramann  
Barbara Ham  
Marc Manni  
Erin Russell

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<<http://www.psu.uidaho.edu>>. A copy of this report can also be obtained by contacting:

Park Studies Unit  
College of Natural Resources, Room 15  
P.O. Box 441139  
University of Idaho  
Moscow, ID 83844-1139  
(208) 885-2585

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# Foreword

## *from the Director*

According to one poll of the American public, 85% of those responding have visited a National Park System area at some time in their lives. Children may visit for the first time when their schools use the parks as classrooms to learn about history or nature firsthand. Others first visit the parks on a vacation with their family.

What keeps the public coming back to the parks? People cite a variety of reasons, including opportunities for learning significant stories about our nation's history, recreating in inspiring landscapes, socializing with others, hearing sounds of nature, enjoying beautiful scenery, and experiencing solitude. In 2004, there were almost 277 million visits to the 388 units of the National Park System. To keep visitors coming to the parks, opportunities and experiences that are important to visitors and of high quality must be offered. Visitor studies, such as those described in this report, show how visitors' expectations can be met, while also fulfilling the NPS mission to preserve park resources unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.



The Visitor Services Project (VSP) and the Visitor Survey Card (VSC) share what visitors think about their park experiences. Through in-depth visitor studies and the annual visitor satisfaction card, the VSP and VSC continue to provide useful feedback from the public about park personnel, services, and facilities. The VSP has completed visitor studies at over 120 parks since 1988, and the VSC has provided annual visitor feedback to all parks since 1998.

In this redesigned annual report, "*Serving the Visitor 2004*," the VSP and VSC show that the American public, as well as international visitors, continue to be well served by the employees of the National Park Service. One section features the increasingly important role of park websites in informing visitors about the National Park System. Please take a few moments to review this interesting report.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Fran P. Mainella". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Fran P. Mainella  
Director

# Introduction

Park managers value feedback from park visitors who help assess how well each park is being managed. This feedback plays a crucial role in the overall operation of a national park unit, helping managers to provide better services and facilities for visitors, better protect park resources, prioritize the work that needs to be done, and more effectively spend limited dollars.

Two types of studies—the Visitor Services Project (VSP) in-depth visitor studies and the Visitor Survey Card (VSC)—both provide important data on how well the visitor is being served, as well as feedback for the park manager. Operating out of the Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho, this branch of the National Park Service (NPS) asks visitors to evaluate their park experiences. Since 1988, the VSP has conducted over 145 in-depth visitor studies in over 120 units of the National Park System. Through these customized studies, park managers obtain accurate information about visitors—who they are, what they do, their needs, opinions, and suggestions about improving park operations. Park managers have used these data to improve operations and better serve the public.

The VSC has used a visitor satisfaction card for the past seven years to survey visitors to over 300 units of the National Park System. The card continues to be used annually by NPS units to measure performance related to visitor satisfaction and visitor understanding. The survey results allow park managers to report performance in accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). In addition, the results can be applied to management needs, such as improving the

design of park facilities, identifying general strengths and weaknesses in visitor services, and employee training. Results are compiled into park, cluster, regional, and national reports.

The first section of this report describes visitors' evaluations of 10 important services, taken from the in-depth visitor studies in selected parks. The quality ratings by visitors in this report are *indicators* of

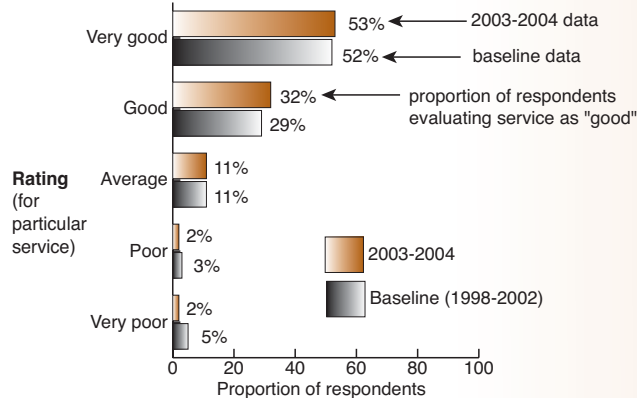
visitor service and include only a few of the services provided by the NPS. In this section, each graph compares 2 years of current data (2003-2004), shown in color, with 5-year baseline data (1998-2002), shown in black. New in this year's report are highlights of the use and quality ratings for park websites and quality ratings of access for disabled persons.



*Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, 2004*

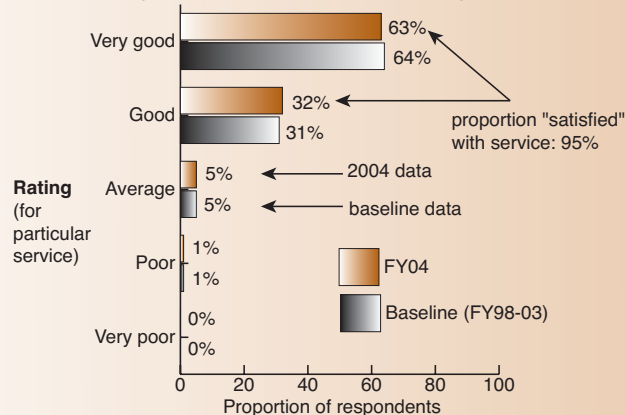


2003-2004: Number of parks represented; number of respondents represented; total percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.



Sample graph for in-depth visitor studies

2004: Number of parks represented; number of respondents represented; total percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.



Sample graph for visitor satisfaction card surveys

The second section includes visitor evaluations of important services from the visitor satisfaction card surveys conducted in most NPS units. Included are 3 important service categories—park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities—as well as the overall rating used in reporting GPRA performance. In this section, each graph compares current data

(2004), shown in color, with a 6-year baseline of data (1998-2003), shown in black.

An appendix at the end of this report describes the research methods and limitations of both types of studies.

## Visitor comments

Continue to advertise so more people will become aware of this wonderful Park & your great programs

I hope to take advantage of what opportunities the park has to offer the next time I'm back - and I will be back!

# VSP Visitor Studies

## General Services

### Visitor centers

Visitor centers offer information, publications for sale, and other services to help visitors enjoy their park visit. The ratings for the general quality of visitor centers in 6 parks are shown in Figure 1.

- 73% of visitor groups rated the quality of visitor centers as “very good” or “good,” lower than the baseline rating of 81%.
- 12% rated the quality of visitor centers as “average,” lower than the baseline rating of 14%.
- 15% rated the quality of visitor centers as “very poor” or “poor,” higher than the baseline rating of 5%.

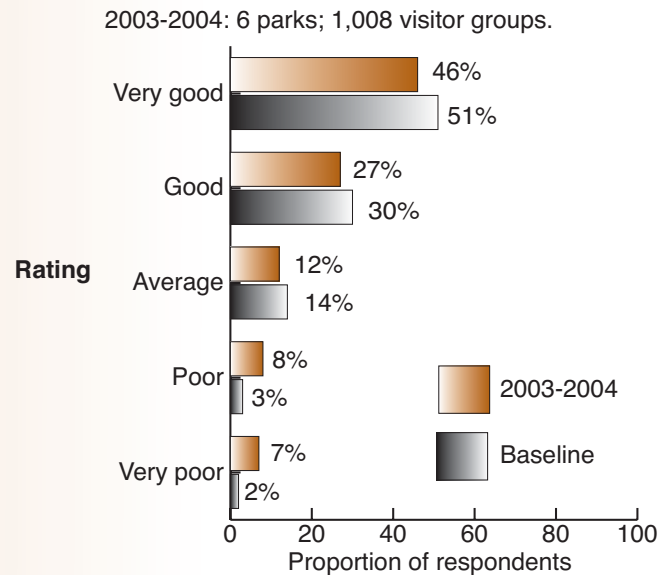


Figure 1: Quality of visitor centers

### Park personnel

Park employees, such as rangers at entrance stations, maintenance employees, emergency response teams, and law enforcement officers are an important part of many visitors' park experience. Visitors at 17 parks rated the quality of park personnel at those parks, as shown in Figure 2.

- 91% of visitor groups rated the quality of park personnel as “very good” or “good,” higher than the baseline rating of 88%.
- 6% of visitor groups rated the quality of personnel as “average,” lower than the baseline rating of 8%.
- 3% of visitor groups rated the quality of park personnel as “very poor” or “poor,” equal to the baseline rating.

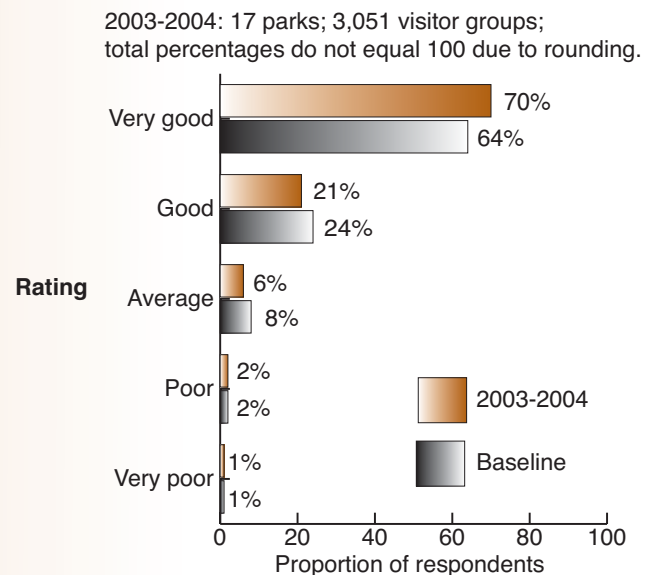


Figure 2: Quality of park personnel

## Directional signs

Directional signs are important in helping visitors find their way around parks and locate services, facilities, and points of interest. Visitors at 12 parks evaluated the quality of directional signs in and around those parks (see Figure 3).

- Most visitor groups (77%) rated the quality of directional signs as “very good” or “good,” equal to the baseline rating.
- 16% of visitor groups rated the quality of directional signs as “average,” higher than the baseline rating of 15%.
- 6% of visitor groups rated the quality of directional signs as “very poor” or “poor,” slightly lower than the baseline rating of 7%.

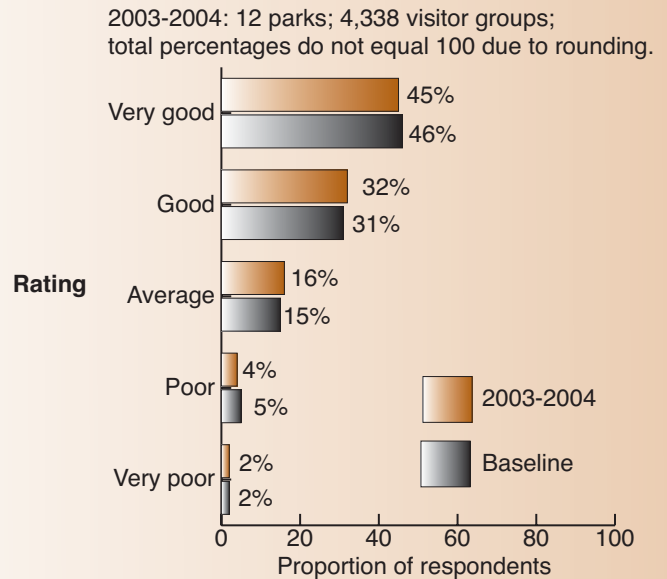


Figure 3: Quality of directional signs



Keweenaw National Historical Park, 2004

## Visitor Comment

*We did not expect the visitor's center to be so well organized and staffed with knowledgeable staff who were helpful and enthusiastic. It was easy to find each site due to well placed directional signs.*

# NPS Facilities

## Restrooms

Restrooms are an essential park service. Figure 4 shows the visitor groups' ratings of the overall quality of restrooms in 17 parks.

- The quality of restrooms was rated as “very good” or “good” by 76% of visitor groups, higher than the baseline rating of 72%.
- Another 17% of visitors felt the restrooms were “average,” compared to the baseline rating of 20%.
- 8% rated the restrooms as “very poor” or “poor,” equal to the baseline rating.

2003-2004: 17 parks; 4,497 visitor groups;  
total percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

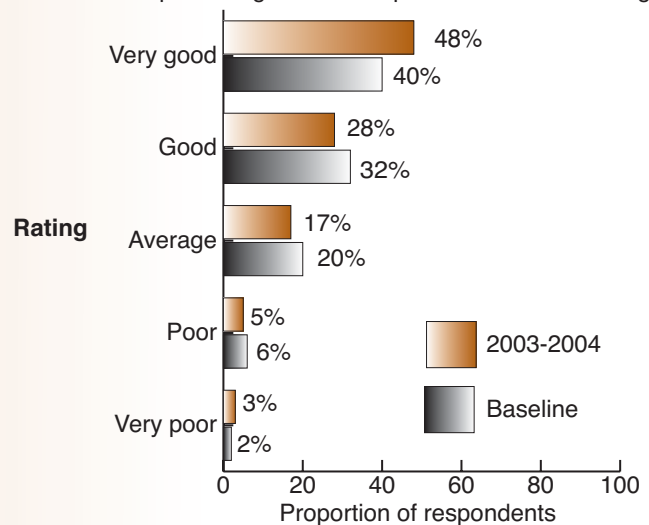


Figure 4: Quality of restrooms



*Painted Hills Unit - John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, 2004*

## Visitor Comment

Perhaps one or two picnic tables not on the grounds (maybe in the woods near the parking) would make it more convenient for a longer visit.

## Campgrounds

Camping is a central part of some visitors' park experience. Visitors at 8 parks were asked to rate the quality of NPS campgrounds in those parks.

- 79% rated the campgrounds as "very good" or "good," compared to the baseline rating of 78% (see Figure 5).
- Another 15% responded that the campgrounds were "average," compared to the baseline rating of 14%.
- 6% rated the campgrounds as "very poor" or "poor," lower than the baseline rating of 8%.

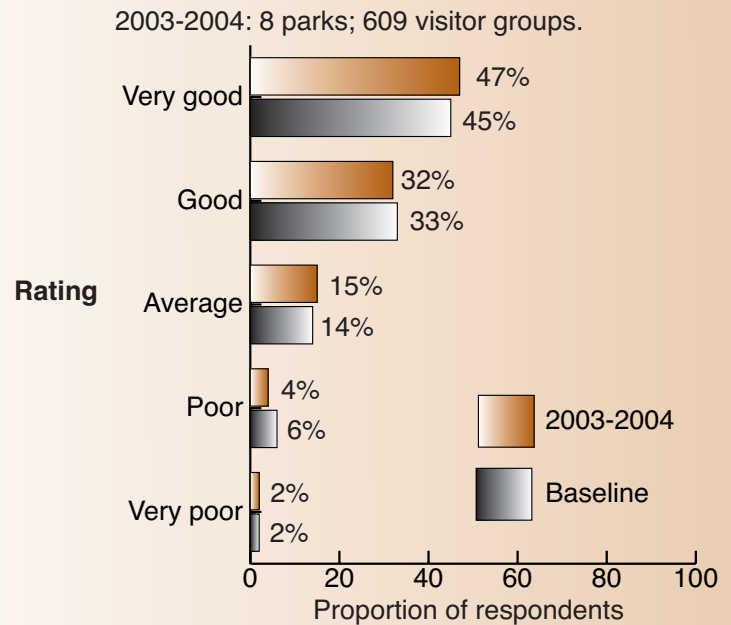


Figure 5: Quality of campgrounds

2003-2004: 11 parks; 584 visitor groups;  
total percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

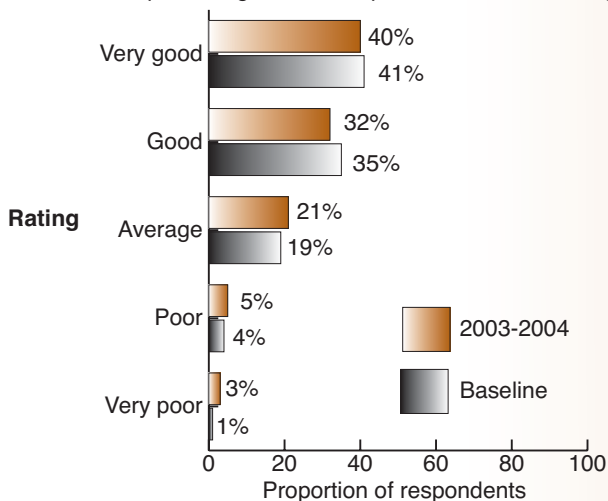


Figure 6: Quality of picnic areas

## Picnic areas

Picnicking is a traditional activity that many visitors enjoy. Figure 6 shows how visitors at 11 parks rated the quality of picnic areas in those parks.

- 72% of visitor groups rated the overall quality of picnic areas as "very good" or "good," lower than the baseline rating of 76%.
- 21% rated picnic areas as "average," compared to the baseline rating of 19%.
- 8% of visitor groups felt the overall quality of picnic areas was "very poor" or "poor," higher than the baseline rating of 5%.

# Interpretive Services

## Ranger Programs

Ranger programs include guided walks and tours, campfire programs, and living history demonstrations. In 18 parks, visitors were asked to rate ranger programs, as shown in Figure 7.

- 90% of visitor groups felt the quality of ranger programs was “very good” or “good,” higher than the baseline rating of 87%.
- 7% responded that ranger programs were “average,” compared to the baseline rating of 9%.
- Another 3% rated ranger programs as “very poor” or “poor,” less than the baseline rating of 4%.

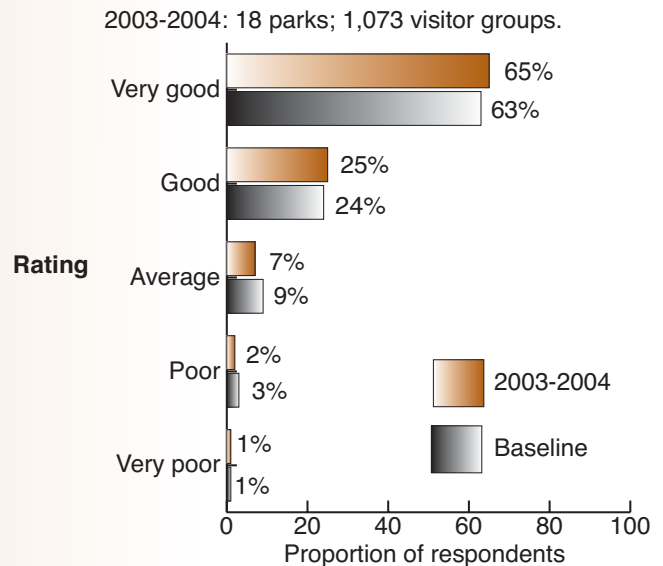


Figure 7: Quality of ranger programs

## Exhibits

Exhibits in visitor centers, museums, and along roadsides and trailsides are a valuable interpretive service offered in parks. As shown in Figure 8, visitors at 17 parks evaluated the quality of exhibits in those parks.

- Most visitor groups (83%) rated the overall quality of exhibits as “very good” or “good,” higher than the baseline rating of 77%.
- Another 14% of visitor groups felt the quality of exhibits was “average,” compared to the baseline rating of 18%.
- 4% of visitor groups rated the overall quality of exhibits as “very poor” or “poor,” equal to the baseline rating.

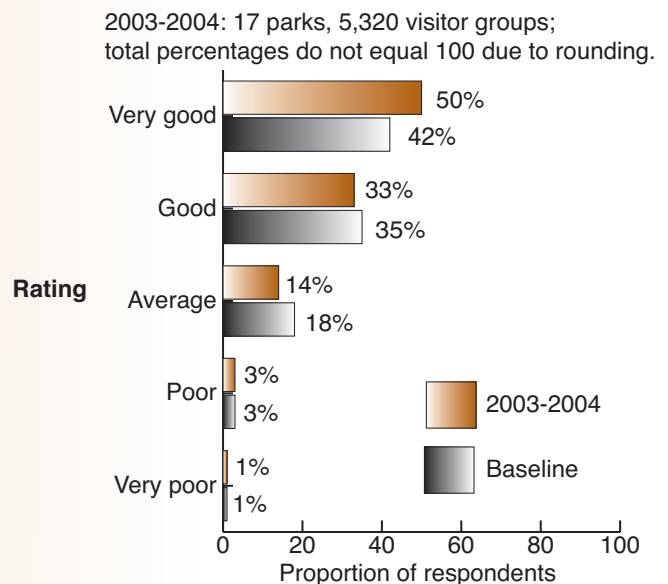


Figure 8: Quality of exhibits





*Effigy Mounds National Monument, 2004*

## Visitor Comment

*We were deeply impressed + touched by the skill, dedication, diligence + courage it has taken to create this interpretive sight - I applaud those people / 1000's of volunteer hours which this has taken - We are thankful that this aspect of our collective history has come to light. We hope it can inspire more wisdom in the future + lead to a celebration of diversity of all peoples, wherever we live.*

## Park brochures

Most parks have a brochure with a map and basic information to help visitors plan their visit. The brochure is usually distributed to visitors as they enter the park or arrive at a visitor center. Figure 9 shows the ratings by visitor groups at 19 parks.

- 87% of visitor groups rated park brochures as “very good” or “good,” higher than the baseline rating of 84%.
- 11% felt the quality of brochures was “average,” lower than the baseline rating of 12%.
- 3% rated the overall quality of park brochures as “very poor” or “poor,” equal to the baseline rating.

2003-2004: 19 parks; 5,747 visitor groups;  
total percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

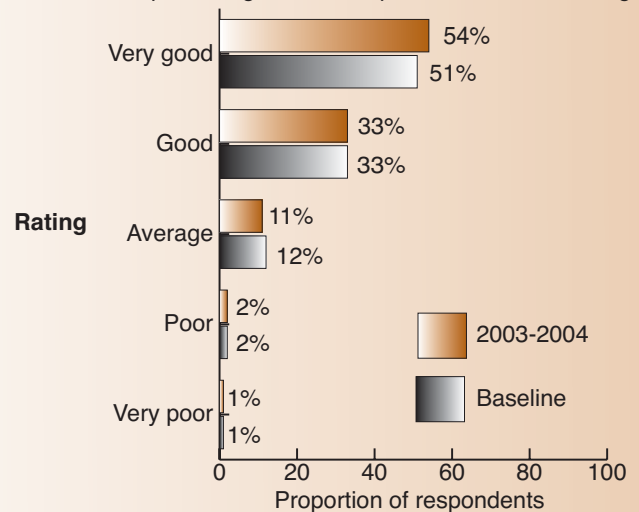


Figure 9: Quality of park brochures

## Concession Services

Concession services include lodging, food services, and gift shops as many parks have hotels, motels, restaurants, cafeterias, or snack bars within their boundaries. However, no lodging or food services were within parks' boundaries in any of the 2004 surveys. The only comparable concession service is quality of gift shops, as shown in Figure 10.

- 77% of visitor groups at 18 parks rated the overall quality of gift shops as “very good” or “good,” higher than the baseline rating of 71%.
- 18% felt the quality of gift shops as “average,” compared to the baseline rating of 23%.
- 4% rated quality of gift shops as “very poor” or “poor,” lower than the baseline rating of 6%.

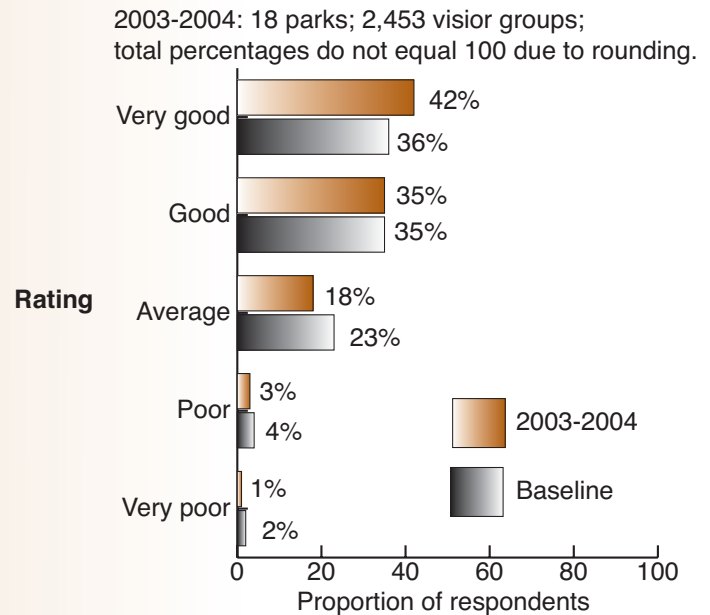


Figure 10: Quality of gift shops

## Visitor Comment

*He would like to see a better gift shop  
and a sit down restaurant. He  
believe both would be utilized to the  
maximum.*



Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center,  
Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, 2004



# Overall Quality of Services

The services evaluated by the in-depth visitor studies are indicators of how well the NPS is serving the public. Figure 11 shows ratings of 10 visitor services based on 28,680 respondents at 21 parks. These ratings are an index created by combining the ratings for the individual services.

- Most visitor groups (81%) rated the overall quality of services as “very good” or “good,” slightly higher than the baseline rating of 80%.
- 13% rated the overall quality as “average,” compared to the baseline rating of 16%.
- 5% felt the overall quality of services as “very poor” or “poor,” lower than the baseline rating of 6%.

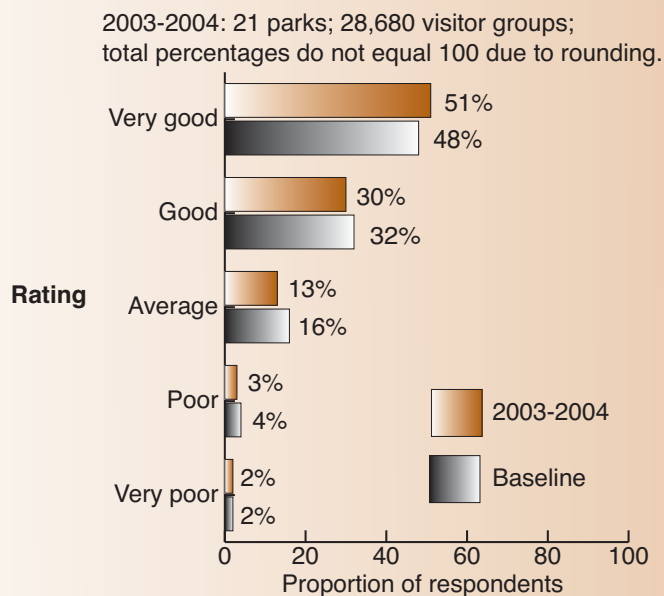


Figure 11: Overall quality of services

## Visitor Comment

*I came by myself as a sidetrip while other family members did other activities. I loved the visit. For a midwesterner who lives in the city, it was incredibly refreshing to experience real quiet. Plus, the ranger who handed me this survey was an excellent representative for the park.*



Joshua Tree National Park, 2004

# VSP Highlights

## Websites as source of information

With the rapid development of the World Wide Web and broadband Internet access, Internet webpages have become one of the most popular sources of information in everyday life. Figure 12 shows the growth rate of computers and Internet access among U.S. households. In 1997, 36.6% of households (37.4 million) had computers. Nearly 61.8% (65.2 million households) in 2003 had computers. The percent of households with Internet access also rapidly increased from 18.0% in 1997 to 54.6% in 2003.

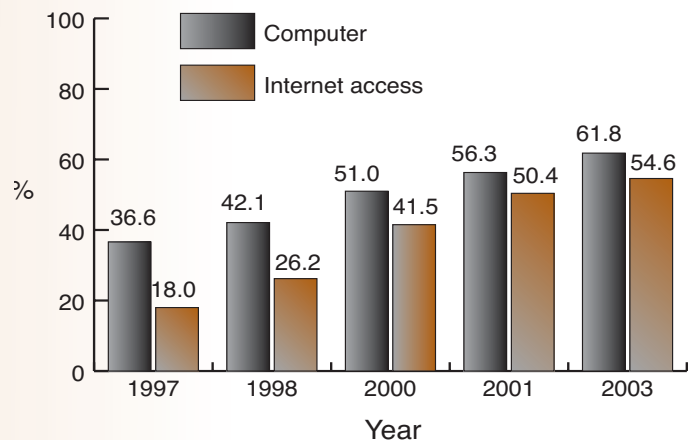


Figure 12: Computers and Internet access in U.S. households (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey)

## Visitor Comments

REVIEW EXISTING "PUBLIC AWARENESS" PROGRAM  
AND UPGRADE, MAXIMIZING INTERNET AND CABLE TV  
(TRAVEL CHANNEL) USE TO HEIGHTEN PUBLIC INTEREST

We were just in Alaska at Denali NP. We were able to find sufficient info on wilderness or backcountry backpacking/camping on their website. We had a difficult time finding this info on yours.

In order to plan a visit to a unit of the National Park System, visitors often obtain information prior to their visit from different sources such as travel guides, tour books, friends, relatives, previous visits, and other sources. In 1997, VSP in-depth questionnaires started asking whether visitors used national park websites—[www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)—and other websites as a source of information to plan their trip. In some studies, visitors were also asked if they would use park websites or other websites as a source of information to plan future visits.

Figures 13 and 14 show website usage trends among national park visitors from 1999 to 2004. Overall, about 20% of visitor groups used park websites to obtain information about parks prior to visiting, while on average 12% used other websites.

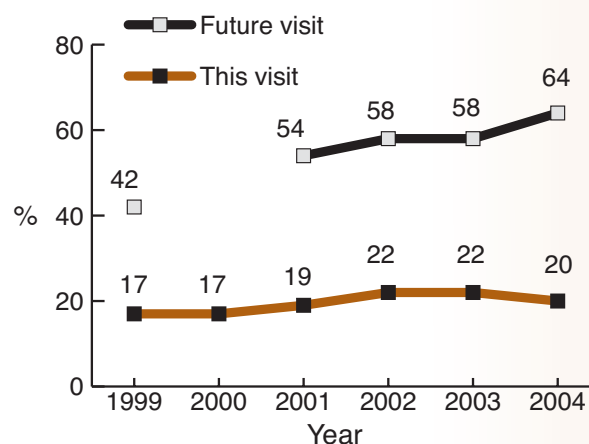


Figure 13: Proportions of visitor group using park website as a source of information

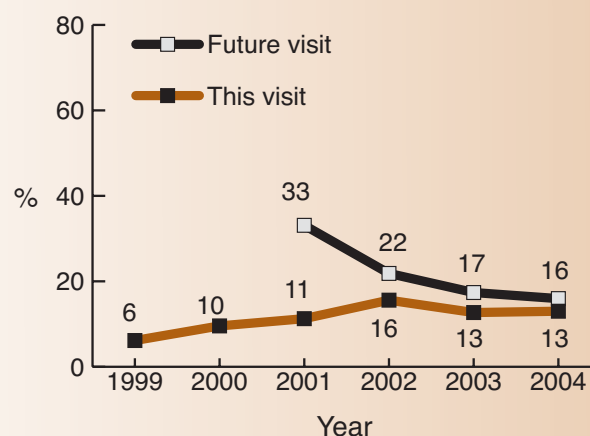


Figure 14: Proportions of visitor groups using other websites as a source of information

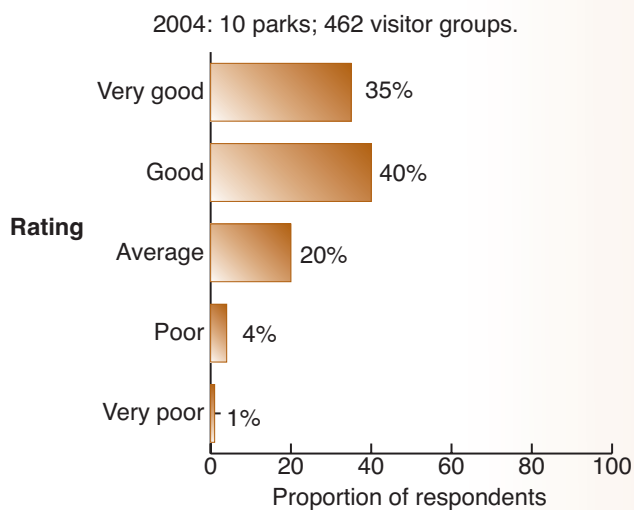


Figure 15: Quality of park website

There is an increasing trend in the number of visitors who intend to use park websites to plan future visits while there is a decreasing trend of using other websites.

- In 2004 results, 64% of visitor groups indicated they would use park websites to plan future visits, while 54% said they would use park websites for planning in 2001.
- Other website usage for planning future visits had decreased to 16% in 2004 from 33% in 2001.

Figure 15 shows the current ratings of park website quality.

- 75% rated park website as “very good” or “good.”
- 5% rated the quality of as “very poor” or “poor.”

## Access for disabled persons

While preserving natural and cultural resources is an important mission of the National Park Service, ensuring public access to these resources is also an important task. At 19 parks, visitor groups who had members with disabilities/impairments, were asked to rate the quality of access for disabled persons at those parks.

- 75% of visitor groups rated the quality of access for disabled persons as “very good” or “good,” which shows an improvement from the baseline rating of 68% (see Figure 16).
- 14% rated the quality as “average,” compared to the baseline rating of 17%.
- 12% rated the quality of access for disabled persons as “very poor” or “poor,” less than the baseline rating of 15%.

2003-2004: 19 parks; 154 visitor groups;  
total percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

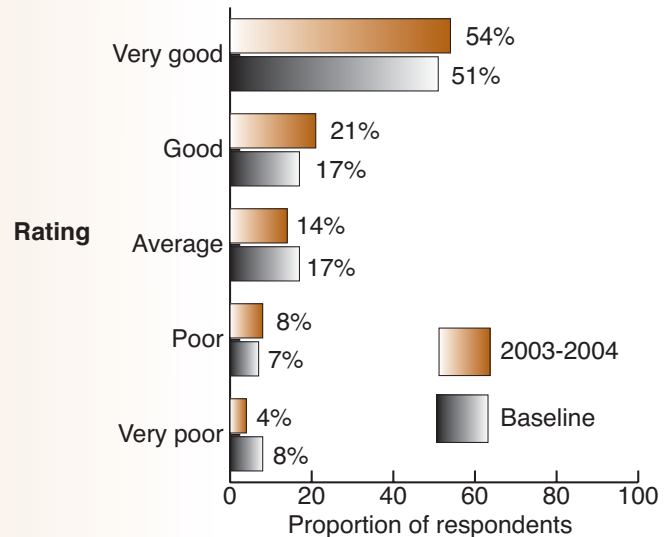


Figure 16: Quality of access for disabled persons



Wright Brothers National Memorial, 2002

## Visitor Comment

rangers enabled us to see as much as possible of park despite physical health limitations

# Visitor Survey Card

In 1993, Congress enacted the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). This law requires all federal agencies to set goals and report progress toward those goals. One of GPRA's purposes is to promote "...a new focus on results, service quality, and visitor satisfaction" for the American people. The NPS is following the lead set forth by GPRA by setting agency goals to better manage its resources and services.

For the natural, cultural, and recreational resources in NPS care, and for the people served, GPRA requires the NPS to report how its goals are being met. One way to measure these goals is to survey visitors and ask them about the quality of their experiences while visiting NPS units (i.e., measure visitor satisfaction).

The NPS is measuring visitor satisfaction to meet GPRA requirements. In early 1998, the NPS completed the development of a standardized visitor satisfaction card. The card has been used annually (since 1998) by most NPS units to measure performance related to visitor satisfaction. In 2004, the visitor

satisfaction card was completed by a sample of visitors at 309 national park units. At year's end, a total of 28,160 visitors had completed and returned the visitor satisfaction card.

On the following pages are graphs showing visitor evaluations of the quality of services within 3 important service categories—park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities.

These ratings are an index created by combining the ratings for individual indicators within the service category. For this section, and for GPRA requirements, a visitor is "satisfied" when he or she rated a service as either "very good" or "good."



*New River Gorge National River, 2004*

## Visitor Comment

*I was favorably impressed with the number & clarity of exhibits. Rangers are numerous & well informed - but they're always well-informed And helpful!*



## Park facilities

Visitor opinions of 5 key indicators are used to measure visitor satisfaction with park facilities. These indicators are:

- visitor centers,
- exhibits,
- restrooms,
- walkways, trails, and roads, and
- campgrounds and/or picnic areas.

Most visitors (90%) were satisfied with these park facilities provided within the National Park System, compared to the baseline of 89% (see Figure 17).

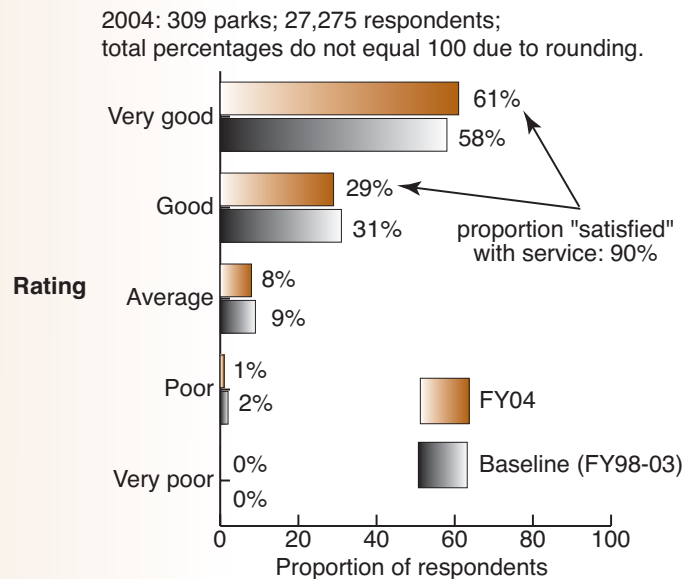


Figure 17: Combined index for satisfaction with park facilities



Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, 2004

## Visitor Comments

*Showers would be nice but not at the expense of tracking primitive theme.*

*As a boater and CANADIAN I really really appreciated the very nice floating toilets. Would a kiosk be possible?*

## Visitor Services

Visitor opinions of 4 key indicators are used to measure satisfaction with visitor services provided in the parks. These indicators are:

- assistance from park employees,
- park maps or brochures,
- ranger programs, and
- commercial services in the park.

The majority of visitors (92%) were satisfied with these services provided within the National Park System, compared to the baseline rating of 91%, as shown in Figure 18.

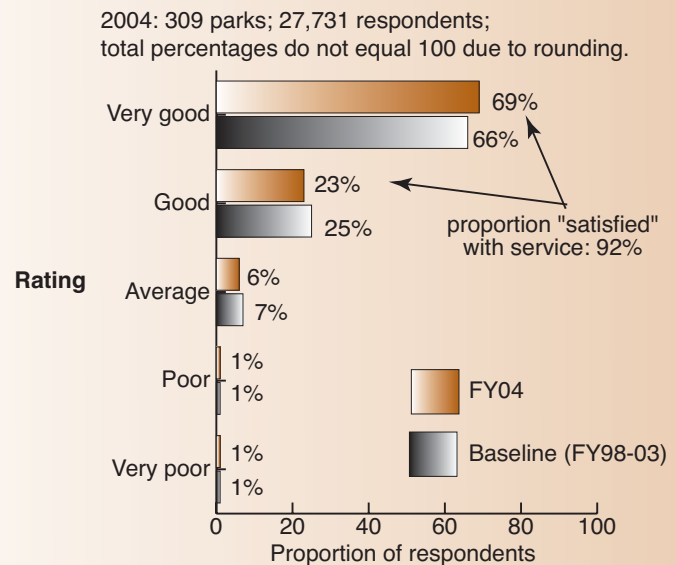


Figure 18: Combined index for satisfaction with visitor services

## Visitor Comments

*The park ranger (can't remember his name) went completely out of his way to make this a fabulous trip for us*

*As a "temporary" vis. ctr - it was outstanding - the staff was very enthusiastic. How could he move out dock pits - maybe a trail close to site??*



Quincy Mine Hoist Tour, Keweenaw National Historical Park, 2004

## Recreational Opportunities

Visitor opinions of 3 key indicators are used to measure visitor satisfaction with recreational opportunities provided in the parks. These indicators are:

- learning about nature, history, or culture,
- outdoor recreation, and
- sightseeing.

As shown in Figure 19, most respondents (93%) were satisfied with these recreational opportunities provided within the National Park System, equal to the baseline rating.

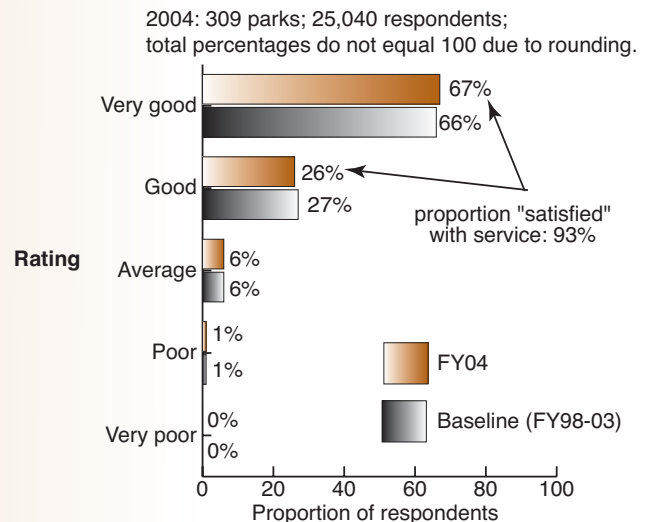


Figure 19: Combined index for satisfaction with recreational opportunities



*Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, 2004*

## Visitor Comment

- Reduction & elimination of 4WD exception of designated trails - these quickly & easily destroy
- Ensuring hikers, walkers, climbers stay on trails
- Introduce a mobile information talk unit to tour different campsites in the evenings giving talks/info. on different topics about the NP.



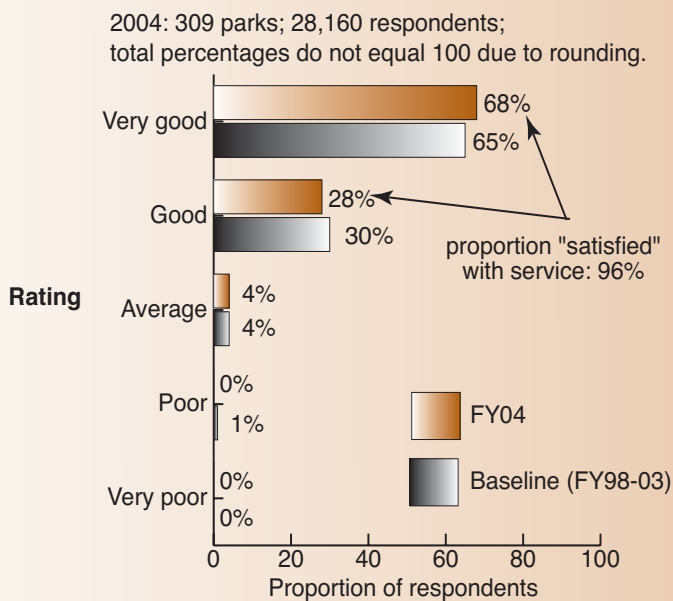
## Overall Quality of Facilities, Services, and Recreational Opportunities

NPS units are required to annually report performance related to a broad list of GPRA goals. Visitor satisfaction is one of these goals. The NPS 1999 GPRA goal IIa1 (visitor satisfaction) states that “95% of park visitors are satisfied with appropriate park facilities, services, and recreational opportunities.”

For GPRA reporting purposes, the visitor satisfaction card includes an overall quality question used as the primary measure of visitor satisfaction. This question asked visitors to rate the “overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities.” Visitor responses to this question are used to calculate each park’s visitor satisfaction rating. Again, a visitor is considered “satisfied” if their response to this overall quality question was either “very good” or “good.”

Figure 20 shows the overall quality rating based on 28,160 respondents in 309 units in the National Park System. In 2004, this satisfaction level (96%) was greater than the 95% baseline rating.

The visitor satisfaction card results show strong evidence of excellent visitor service across the National Park System. The NPS has demanding GPRA goals for visitor satisfaction. Of the 309 parks which successfully completed a 2004 visitor satisfaction survey, 210 parks (68%) met the annual servicewide goal of 95% visitor satisfaction. Most parks (279 or 90%) of the 309 parks had a visitor satisfaction rating of 90% or greater.



### Visitor Comment

*JUST THANKS FOR A TERRIFIC PROGRAM. MY TAXES WELL SPENT!*

Figure 20: Overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities

The results from the visitor satisfaction card surveys at individual parks were combined to produce a satisfaction rating for each individual NPS region. Figure 21 shows the 7 regions and the percentage of park visitors satisfied overall with appropriate facilities, services, and recreational opportunities. Regional overall visitor satisfaction scores are very similar, ranging from 93% to 96%.

The visitor satisfaction card results can provide parks with benefits beyond simply meeting annual GPRA reporting requirements. These results can be useful in planning, operations, management, and research related to the national parks. The results allow park managers to better understand visitor needs, protect natural and cultural resources, and improve visitor services.

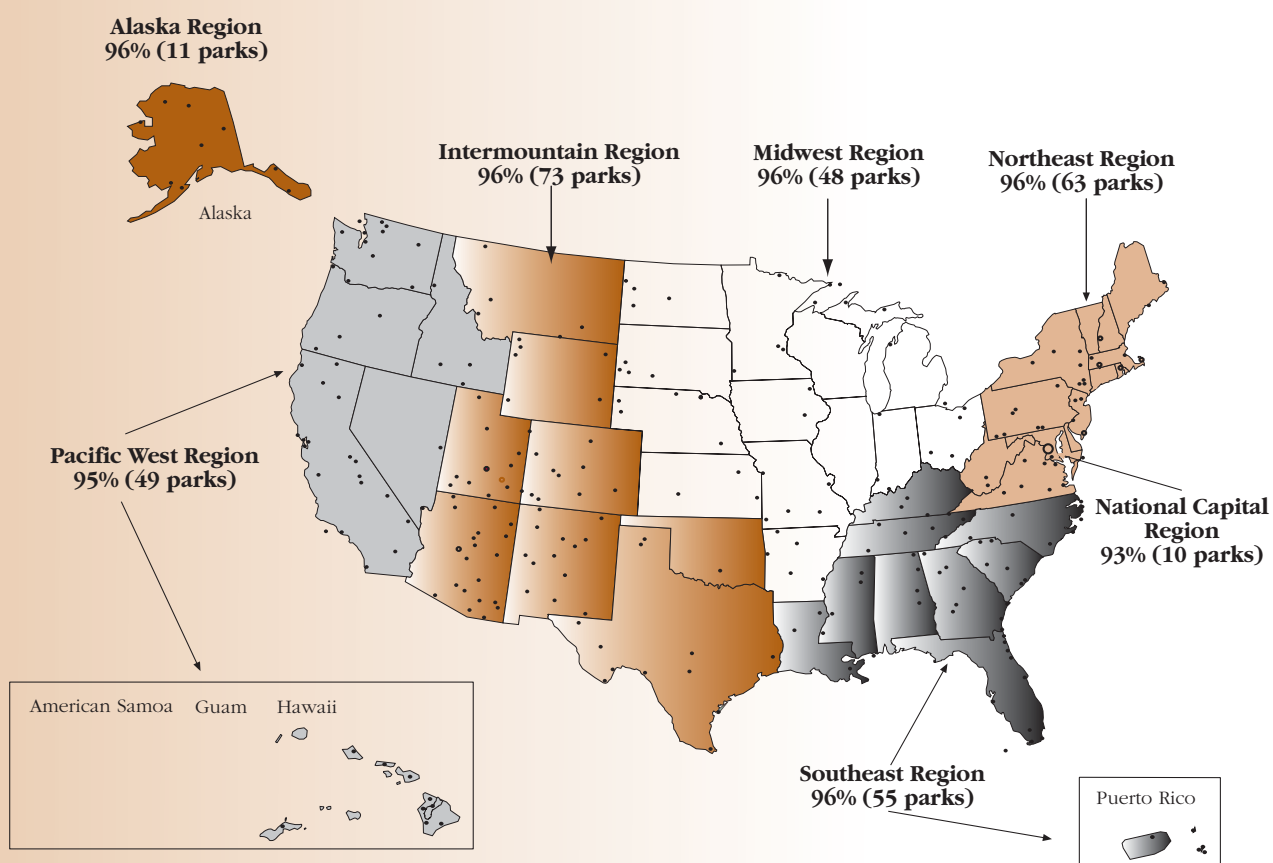


Figure 21: Percentage of visitors satisfied overall, by NPS region, 2004

## Conclusion

Both the in-depth visitor studies and the visitor satisfaction card asked visitors to rate the overall quality of the services provided during their visit.

The study results included in this report show that visitors are largely satisfied with the quality of services they are receiving in the National Park System.

By monitoring visitor satisfaction through different types of visitor studies, and using the information to improve all aspects of park operations, the NPS can continue to protect resources and provide high quality visitor services.



*Effigy Mounds National Monument, 2004*

## Visitor Comments

*Please protect this sacred & beautiful waterland  
so that generations may continue to enjoy  
& learn from it. Thank you!*

*more suggestions for interactive  
sight-seeing activities on the  
self-guided tour (i.e. a more  
detailed map of the rock garden  
or a patch of grass and benches  
so we could stop and enjoy for a  
longer period of time.*

# Research Methods

## VSP Visitor Studies

The in-depth visitor studies conducted by the VSP are based on systematic surveys of park visitors. A random sample of visitor groups is chosen to represent the general visitor population during a 7 to 10-day study period. The sample is usually “stratified,” or distributed by entrance or zone, depending upon park characteristics. Sample size and sampling intervals are based upon estimates using the previous year’s visitation statistics. Results are usually accurate to within 4 percentage points for simple questions, and are somewhat less accurate for more complex ones. The results are statistically significant at the .05 level. This means that if different samples had been drawn, the results would have been similar 95 out of 100 times.

VSP personnel hold an on-site workshop with park staff to develop the survey questionnaire and plan the study. Standard demographic questions are included in each survey, and park managers can include additional “customized” questions to meet their information needs. In addition, questionnaires include open-ended questions in which visitors are asked to provide comments about their visit.

Short (2-minute) interviews are conducted as visitors arrive at a sampling site. The interviews are to distribute the mail-back questionnaires, collect data for a non-response bias check, and obtain mailing addresses for follow-up reminders. The refusal rate (the proportion of visitors contacted that decline to participate)

currently averages 7%. The response rate (the proportion of visitors that return their questionnaires) currently averages 77%. A respondent, for the purposes of this report, is a member of a visitor group (at least 16 years of age) who voluntarily participated in the survey by accepting the questionnaire for the group. However, the whole group was asked to provide their input and opinions when answering the questionnaire. Non-response bias was checked based on both individual and group characteristics using respondent age and group size to detect the differences between respondents and non-respondents (from initial interview data). For multiple choice and numerical answer questions, the data are coded and entered in computers by the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center at Washington State University. The data are analyzed using a standard statistical analysis program. Responses to open-ended questions (in which visitors write comments) are categorized and summarized by VSP staff.

In-depth visitor studies have several limitations. Responses to mail-back questionnaires may not reflect actual behavior or opinions. The results cannot always be generalized beyond the study periods. Visitor groups that do not include an English-speaking person may be under-represented, although parks may elect to use questionnaires in multiple languages, such as English and Spanish. These limitations apply to all studies of this type.

## Visitor Survey Card Studies

The visitor satisfaction card surveys have a somewhat different methodology than the in-depth visitor studies. For each survey, park staff select an interval sampling plan based on the previous years' visitation. In each park, 400 visitor satisfaction cards are distributed to a random sample of visitors during a 30-day study period. Results are usually accurate to within 6 percentage points. For individual park reports, results are statistically significant at the .05 level. This means that if different samples had been drawn, the results would have been similar 95 out of 100 times. For the National Park System as a whole, results are accurate to within 1 percentage point. These results are statistically significant at the .01 level.

Park staff are trained to distribute cards according to a standard set of survey instructions and guidelines. A standardized visitor satisfaction card which includes the same set of service-related questions is used for each survey. In addition, the card includes open-ended questions to evaluate visitor understanding and obtain overall feedback.

Returned cards are electronically scanned, and the data coded and prepared by Visual Input Systems Analysts, Incorporated, located in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. The response rate (the proportion of visitors that return their survey card) for the visitor satisfaction card surveys administered in 309 parks in 2004 averaged 26%. A test for non-response bias was conducted by comparing the results for the same question from both the visitor satisfaction card

and the in-depth visitor studies. The data were gathered in the same parks, seasons, and survey locations. The results of this test suggest that non-response bias was not significant.

For individual park reports, frequency distributions are calculated for each indicator and category. At the end of the calendar year, responses from individual park surveys are combined to create reports at the cluster, region, and systemwide levels. Data from parks with less than 30 returned cards, or from parks with discrepancies in data collection methods, are omitted from these reports and *Serving the Visitor*.

The visitor satisfaction card surveys have several limitations. The data reflect visitor opinions about the NPS unit's facilities, services, and recreational opportunities during the survey period. The results do not necessarily apply to visitors during other times of the year, or park visitors who did not visit one of the survey locations. Visitor groups that do not include an English-speaking person may be under-represented. These limitations apply to all studies of this type.



## VSP Visitor Studies List

The data for in-depth visitor studies in this report came from the following NPS units. The questionnaires and complete reports are available online at:

<http://www.psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.htm>

Acadia National Park, Maine  
Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, Wisconsin  
Arches National Park, Utah  
Badlands National Park, South Dakota  
Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida  
Biscayne National Park, Florida  
C&O Canal National Historical Park, Maryland  
Capulin Volcano National Monument, New Mexico  
Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, Georgia  
Colonial National Historical Park (Jamestown), Virginia  
Cowpens National Battlefield, South Carolina  
Crater Lake National Park, Oregon  
Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, Idaho  
Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, Tennessee  
Cumberland Island National Seashore, Georgia  
Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, Ohio  
Dry Tortugas National Park, Florida  
Effigy Mounds National Monument, Iowa  
Eisenhower National Historic Site, Pennsylvania  
Everglades National Park, Florida  
Fort Stanwix National Monument, New York  
George Washington Birthplace National Monument, Virginia  
Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve, Alaska  
Grand Canyon National Park – North Rim, Arizona  
Grand Canyon National Park – South Rim, Arizona  
Great Sand Dunes National Monument & Preserve, Colorado  
Haleakala National Park, Hawaii  
Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, Pennsylvania  
Iwo Jima/Netherlands Carillon Memorials, Virginia  
Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve, Louisiana  
John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, Oregon

Joshua Tree National Park, California  
Kenai Fjords National Park, Alaska  
Keweenaw National Historical Park, Michigan  
Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Alaska  
Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, North Dakota  
Lassen Volcanic National Park, California  
Manzanar National Historic Site, California  
Mojave National Preserve, California  
National Monuments & Memorials, Washington, D.C.  
New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, Massachusetts  
New River Gorge National River, West Virginia  
Olympic National Park, Washington  
Oregon Caves National Monument, Oregon  
Outer Banks Group (Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Ft. Raleigh National Historic Site and Wright Brothers National Memorial), North Carolina  
Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Michigan  
Pinnacles National Monument, California  
Pipestone National Monument, Minnesota  
Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C.  
Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, New Hampshire  
San Juan National Historic Site, Puerto Rico  
Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks and Sequoia National Forest, California  
Shenandoah National Park, Virginia  
St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Wisconsin/Minnesota  
Stones River National Battlefield, Tennessee  
USS Arizona Memorial, Hawaii  
Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, California  
White House Tours and White House Visitor Center, Washington, D.C.

## Visitor Survey Card Studies

The data for visitor satisfaction card surveys in this report came from 309 NPS units. Reports are available online at:

<http://www.psu.uidaho.edu/vsc.htm>